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Breakthrough elusive amid heavy flow of water, silt into tunnel

Despite relentless efforts by Army, Navy, NDRF, and GSI, rescue workers could not reach those trapped inside the collapsed Srisailam tunnel. Experts are now assessing the feasibility of drilling from the top and side of the tunnel — though vertical drilling is very risky. Telangana Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy said there is only one entry or exit to the SLBC tunnel, which is now partially collapsed | P7

Kejri didn't want you to know: ₹2K cr loss

CAG finds revenue drain after excise policy revamp

ANUP VERMA @ New Delhi

A report of the national auditor the Kejriwal government failed to table in the Delhi assembly, faulted it for a cumulative loss of ₹2,002.68 crore to the exchequer between November 2021 when the new excise policy was rolled out and September 2022, when it was scrapped. This newspaper was the first to report the Delhi excise policy scam.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) that was finally tabled in the House on Tuesday, said the AAP government lost ₹1,890 crore because of its failure to re-tender surrendered licenses. Losses under various other heads included revenue slip of ₹941.53 crore since retail shops were not opened in non-conforming wards; ₹144 crore hole due to fee waiver to zonal licencees citing Covid-19 despite the excise department's advice to the contrary; and ₹27 crore loss due to the failure to collect proper security deposits from zonal licencees.

The report established that the failure to enforce Rule 35 of the Delhi Excise Rules, 2010, resulted in the grant of licences to wholesalers having interests in manufacturing and wholesalers having relationships with retailers. It polluted the entire liquor supply chain with common beneficial ownership across licensees in manufacturing, wholesale and retail.

ENABLING MONOPOLIES

AAP's policy forced manufacturers to tie up with a few wholesalers, allowing them to dominate the supply chain. 3 wholesalers (Indospirit, Mahadev Liquors, Brindco) controlled over 71% of supply. So, prices could be artificially inflated

192 BRANDS — Supplied by just three wholesalers. It gave them power to decide which brands to push

The report pointed out that the wholesaler margin was hiked from 5% to 12%, claiming it was necessary to compensate them for setting up a quality checking system through government-approved labs at warehouses. However, no such labs were set up. So, profit margin of wholesalers shot up, while revenue tanked.

The AAP government awarded retail liquor licences without proper checks on solvency, financial statements, and criminal records. Running a liquor zone required an initial investment of over ₹100 crore, yet no qualifying financial criteria was set. As a result, licenses were given to financially weak entities, with multiple bidders reporting minimal to zero income in the last three years. They indicated proxy ownership and possible favouritism.

Dr G: Guarantee schemes a burden on state govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

HOME Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday admitted that guarantee schemes have become a burden on the state government. However, the government will go ahead with them as they are for the poor.

Dr Parameshwara said, "We knew that the guarantee schemes would be a burden on the government even before implementing them. But they are for the poor and downtrodden. Hence, we implemented them." At a meeting under the Karnataka Development Programme (KDP) in Tumakuru on Monday, Turvekere MLA MT Krishnappa from JDS suggested to Dr Parameshwara to extend the guarantee schemes only for BPL cardholders.

Dr Parameshwara said when the Congress announced the guarantee schemes in its manifesto for the Assembly elections in the state, it did not declare that they would be only for BPL cardholders. "If Opposition parties are ready, a discussion can be held on limiting the schemes only to the needy," he added.

Claiming that many among those who file IT returns and government employees are not availing themselves of the benefits of the guarantee schemes, the home minister said, "We should discuss the pros and cons of the schemes."

Slamming the BJP, Dr Parameshwara said leaders of that party do not want the guarantee schemes to be implemented successfully. They are trying to stop these schemes meant for the poor. "BJP leaders do not want the government to give money to the poor. This is BJP ideology. By protesting, they are opposing pro-poor schemes. People are watching," he said.

SC/ST FUNDS NOT MISUSED: MINISTER

Reacting to BJP leaders' allegation that the state government is diverting funds allocated for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to implement the guarantee schemes, Dr Parameshwara said the funds allocated for the SCs and STs are being spent for their welfare only. The government implemented the guarantee schemes only after studying various factors. Funds allocated for the welfare of the SCs and STs are not being misused, he added.

EXPRESS READ

Dr G: Why POCSO case filed against conductor?

Belagavi: Home Minister G Parameshwara sought the IGP and Superintendent of Police of Belagavi to submit a report immediately, clarifying as to why a POCSO case was filed against the NWKRTC bus conductor, Mahadev Hukkeri, who was assaulted. Parameshwara said he also sought a report on the assault | P6

CBSE Class 10 boards twice from next year

New Delhi: From 2026, Class 10 students will be able to take CBSE board exams twice in an academic session or choose between the two editions — one in February and another in May, according to a draft policy approved by the board on Tuesday. Stakeholders can submit feedback by March 9 following which it will be finalised | P11

Coming up, first-of-its-kind research centre on addictive behaviours

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

CONCERNED with the excessive and problematic use of technology, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved the setting up a Centre for Advanced Research on Addictive Behaviours (CARAB). The first of its kind centre in the country has been mandated to develop evidence-based intervention targeted at excessive and problematic use of technology, especially among the children and the youth.

"The centre shall address various addictive behaviours in a comprehensive manner. The interventions shall be aimed at prevention, screening, early detection and intervention for internet and technology related addictions among children and youth," according to Prof Yatan Pal Singh Balhara, faculty in-charge of the Behavioral Addictions Clinic (BAC) at AIIMS, New Delhi, who is the lead on this project.

The centre will also be tasked to develop resources for education and health sector workers to strengthen their capacity on prevention and management of these problems. The interventions shall also help reduce the stress, depression, anxiety, addiction associated with use of the internet and technology.

"Also, the centre aims to develop AI-based predictive models to detect vulnerability to excessive and problematic use of technology among the youth," Prof Balhara said.

"Excessive and problematic use of technology has been recognised as a major public health problem. The Economic Survey of India (2024-25) has linked increase in mental health issues in children and adolescents to overuse of the internet and highlighted the urgent need for school and family-level interventions," he added.

ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

Ex-Cong leader Sajjan Kumar gets life term

SHEKHAR SINGH @ New Delhi

A Delhi court on Tuesday sentenced former Congress leader **Sajjan Kumar** to life imprisonment for orchestrating the killings of a father-son duo during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

While delivering the verdict, special judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court underscored the brutality of the crime but stopped short of awarding the death penalty, citing Kumar's age and health conditions.

The prosecution sought the harshest punishment, arguing

Kumar instigated a mob that looted, burned homes, and killed innocent Sikhs following the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984.

The case against Kumar was revived decades later when a Special Investigation Team was formed in 2015 to re-examine the riot cases cases that had been closed without justice. Kumar's first life sentence came in December 2018, when the Delhi HC found him guilty of five murders. Since then, multiple appeals have been filed against his conviction in the HC and the Supreme Court.

The defence team argued that Kumar is an old man with deteriorating health, while the prosecution said mass killings can't be ignored.

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Government of Karnataka

Karnataka
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL EXPO 2025

INAUGURATION: Date: 26th February, 2025, 6:00 PM
Venue: Taj West End, Bangalore

BUSINESS MEETINGS
Date: 27th, 28th February, 2025, 9:30 AM
Venue: B.I.E.C., Tumkur Road, Manjunath Nagar, Bangalore.

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